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HARRIETT JEAN "RUSTY" THOMAS / 1922-2004

**Star-Bulletin food editor
loved social life**

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By Rosemarie Bernardo
rbernardo@starbulletin.com

Friends described Harriett Jean "Rusty" Thomas, a former Honolulu Star-Bulletin food editor, as a friendly person who enjoyed meeting people.

"She was a social butterfly," said caregiver Kelly McArthur.

Thomas died Monday at her Waikiki home due to complications from Parkinson's disease. She was 82.

Thomas was nicknamed "Rusty" because of her flaming red hair. She worked as food editor for the Star-Bulletin from 1949 to 1964.

Thomas was born in Kingsley, Iowa, to Elvin and Jean Pratt. She graduated from Iowa State University in the mid-1940s and married Ernest Hayden



Harriett Thomas:
Former editor met stars
like Lana Turner at
national food
conventions

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"Tommy" Thomas in 1948.

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McArthur said Thomas loved desserts, especially leche flan and bread pudding. In April 1996, Thomas donated a menu collection from her dining experiences to Kapiolani Community College's Food Service Program.

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McArthur further described Thomas as a sharp, inquisitive person who enjoyed attending art openings.

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"I took her to the Contemporary Museum for every opening," said McArthur.

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She also enjoyed dancing, playing volleyball and swimming in Waikiki. Moreover, Thomas was a senior canoe paddler for the Outrigger Canoe Club.

[SB food editor 'Rusty' Thomas dies](#)

She and her husband lived at the Colony Surf since 1961. Ernest Thomas, a Pacific Chemical and Fertilizer chief chemical engineer and U.S. Army colonel, died in February 2003 at their Waikiki home.

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As food editor, Thomas attended national food conventions on the mainland, where she met actors and actresses such as Lana Turner, Joan Crawford and former President Ronald Reagan.

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"Rusty was always very happy. She had a nice, big smile with red hair. She was very friendly," said former Star-Bulletin reporter Harriet Gee. "She was a very outgoing person."

[Ocean Watch](#)
by Susan Scott

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Longtime friend Teddi Chong described Thomas as a gregarious person.

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"She was a wonderful person -- very thoughtful, very sweet," said Chong, a Pearl City resident who knew Thomas since the mid-1950s.

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Instead of a funeral service, a tribute will be held in January to honor Thomas. Arrangements are pending. For information, call 348-8627.

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